

MORE PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COMIC CHARACTER

NO. 45 OCT.

A FAWCETT PUBLICATION

LASH LARUE

WESTERN

10¢

IN
THIS
ISSUE:

**DEAD
MAN**

**WALKS THE
RANGE!**



BACKFIRE

by John Martin



BOB CAREY, the tin-star at Low Butte, was coming out of his office when he saw Jim Kedder, owner of the Bar T spread, ride down the main street.

"Bob!" Jim called from a distance, and the sheriff waved. Carey glanced at the bottom of the steps and waited while fat Jim dismounted.

"Hiya, Jim," Bob began. "What's wrong? You look like you could cut your own throat."

Kedder, whose expression was drawn and set, nodded.

"I might at that," he said. "You got any laws against suicide?"

Carey's blood went cold.

"Sure we have," he said. "There isn't a town, county or country in the world that hasn't. It's a basic law. Nobody's got a right to take life—not even his own."

Jim Kedder sighed.

"All right," he said. "Bob, you know I'm a law-abidin' man," he said. "Well, I reckon it's back to the Old Medicine Man trail for me."

"Thought you retired from sellin' patent medicines, Jim," Bob said, relaxing.

Kedder's face was bitter. "I thought I did, too, Bob. When I came to Low Butte and bought the Bar T spread I thought I was through with one-night stands for life. But I got a daughter at school out East to support. You know things have been tight in all the valley spreads. I need a loan bad to tide me over the comin' winter."

"Banker Wilger ought to give you one," Bob Carey said, his eyes narrowing.

"He ought," Kedder said. "But he won't. Cad Rudge is puttin' pressure on him not to. You know Rudge is the richest man in the valley. Of course even he's tight-pressed for money now, but he's still got enough influence to keep Wilger from loanin' me money."

"But, thunderation," Bob roared, "Wilger's loanin' every other rancher in the valley money."

Kedder glanced at him. "I can't figure out why, Bob, but every time Rudge looks at me, he smiles. It's a queer, knowing smile, as though he knew something I didn't."

"Mornin', Kedder!" A loud, rough voice barked.

Kedder and the sheriff glanced up.

Cad Rudge sat on his cayuse in the middle of main street, smiling.

"Looks like it might be a hard winter, gents," he remarked, and there was more than a tinge of sarcasm in his voice. "Shot a polecat this

mornin' and its hair was pretty thick."

"Maybe not," Bob Carey remarked. His own face was wintry. "There's polecats and polecats."

Cad Rudge went purple-faced instantly. Then, with an effort, he controlled himself. But the anger hadn't died. He glanced at the sky.

"Well, I'd stake my reputation as a weather prophet on it," he said. The sarcasm in his voice deepened. "It'll be a hard winter for some, anyway, eh, Kedder?"

Jim Kedder winced. Then his back stiffened. "I'll get the money I need, Rudge. Don't you worry. Even if I have to go out on the Old Medicine Trail again. Got a special new mud pack for the ladies I'm making up out of my spread."

There was silence. Cad Rudge seemed to choke. Again he controlled himself. From purple his face went almost white. Then, slowly, a strange light kindled in his eyes, a light of self-satisfaction and swift decision. A deep animal chuckle issued from his throat.

"Goin' back to your old trade, eh, Kedder?" he said. "Well, good luck. I think you'll be needin' it." Again he looked at the sky. "Good weather today—for some," he said cryptically and rode on.

Bob Carey scratched his chin. "He knows somethin', that's for certain," the tin-star said.

"Yeah, but what?" Jim Kedder asked desperately. He looked at the sheriff with haggard eyes. Slowly he remounted his horse.

"You see me headin' out of Low Butte to-morrow mornin' with my old medicine wagon, don't laugh, Bob," he said mournfully. "If I can sell my new mixture I might be able to save the spread."

Bob Carey watched him as he went on his way. He knew Kedder was in a practically hopeless condition. To fall down on his payments on the ranch meant he'd lose the whole investment. And Kedder was old. He never could make a comeback as a rancher.

The tin-star dropped over to see Banker Wilger.

"No use askin' me to do anything, Carey," Wilger said, shrugging. "If Rudge took his account out of this bank I'd have to close up. That wouldn't do Low Butte any good, would it?"

Carey had to acknowledge it wouldn't.

He went out of the office badly disturbed. There seemed no way to save Kedder. Then he remembered what he'd been leaving town
(Continued on inside back cover)

APPROVED
READING

The following outstanding magazines are easily identified
on their covers by the words **A FAWCETT PUBLICATION**

CAPT. MARVEL ADVENTURES • THE MARVEL FAMILY • LASH LARUE WESTERN • FUNNY ANIMALS • BATTLE STORIES
ROCKY LANE WESTERN • ROMANIAN GALLERY • SIX-GUN HEROES • THE LITTLE WESTERN • SOLDIER COMICS

Every effort is made to ensure that these famous magazines
contain the highest quality of wholesome entertainment.

W. A. Fawcett Jr. President



THE B DOUBLE B BRANCH . . .

IT WAS MIGHTY NICE OF 'YER BIG BO, TO OPEN UP YORE RANCH HOUSE JUST SO US WANDERERS COULD HOLD OUR MEETIN' TONIGHT!

SHOOB, DON, EVEN THOUGH I'M TEMPORARILY RETIRED FROM THE RANCHIN' BUSINESS, IT'S THE LEAST I COULD DO CONSIDERIN' I'M STILL THE TREASURER OF THE WILLOATE RANCHERS' ASSOCIATION! NOW ON WITH THE BUSINESS!

WELL, THE RAILROAD COMPANY SAYS WE DON'T SHIP ENOUGH CATTLE OUT OF WILLOATE TO WARRANT THEM PUTTIN' UP A BRANCH! HOWEVER, IF WE'RE WILLIN' TO SHARE THE EXPENSE WITH THEM, THEY WILL PUT UP A SPUR, CONNECTIN' US DIRECTLY WITH THE NEAREST DEPOT WHICH IS EIGHTY MILES AWAY! IN THE LONG RUN, IT'LL SAVE ALL OF US A LOT OF MONEY!

OUR SHARE WOULD BE THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS! NOW WHO'S GOIN' TO BE THE FIRST ONE TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION?

I RECKON, DON, THAT'S WHY 'YER ASKED US ALL TO BRING AS MUCH CASH AS WE COULD! HOW MUCH WOULD THIS RAILROAD SPUR COST US?



SHORTLY AFTER...

25,000 \$50,000!
IT'S ALL HERE, MEN!
AND THIS IS THE
SMARTEST INVEST-
MENT ANY OF YOU
EVER MADE!

IT'S TOO LATE TO
GET THE MONEY
TO THE BANK SO
I DECIDE YOU'D
BETTER LOCK IT
IN YOUR WAISTBAGS
ED, TILL MORNING!

I'LL DO
IT RIGHT
NOW!

I'LL SEE YOU AT THE
BANK IN THE MORNING!
AS SOON AS THE MONEY
IS DEPOSITED, I CAN
CONTACT THE RAILROAD
AGENT!

BADLY NEXT MORNING...

I DECIDE IT'S TIME TO GET
OUT OF TOWN--BUT BEFORE
I GO TO THE BANK, I'M GOING
TO STOP OFF AT THE DOC'S
OFFICE! HE DECIDED TO
BE SICK!

BEING SICK

DECIDED TO BE SICK?
JUST WHAT IS BIG ED
RANGLING UP TO?

**WELL, MARSHAL, AT THE CHIEF
MARSHAL'S OFFICE...**

CHIEF,
WHAT
HAPPENED
TO YOUR
HAND?

SAD! DEAD-EYE DORSEAN
CAUGHT ME OFF GUARD
IN THE HILLS AND WISHED
ME BEFORE I COULD
REACH FOR MY SIX-
SHOOTER! IF HE HADN'T
TRIPPED ON A LOG AS HE
CLOSED IN ON ME, I'D BE
A CORPSE NOW!

WITH MY SHOOTING
AND BULLET-POCKING,
I KNEW I WAS NO
MATCH FOR DEAD-
EYE! SO BY THE
TIME HE RESIGNED
HIS BALANCE, I
WAS ON MY WAY
OUT OF TOWN--
AND I MANAGED
TO TRIP HIS
HORSE WITH ME!

YOU LEFT DEAD-
EYE DORSEAN
STRANDED IN THE
HILLS WITHOUT
A HORSE? MAYBE
THERE'S STILL
TIME TO GET ON
HIS TRAIL! WHERE'D
ALL THIS TAKE
PLACE?

ON THE OTHER
SIDE OF SUGAR
LEAF LASH! GET
WHATEVER YOU
DO, DON'T TRY TO
JUMP IT TO SAVE
TIME AS NO ONE
HAS EVER MADE
IT YET!

IS THAT AN
ORDER,
CHIEF?

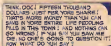
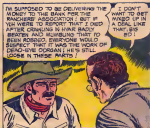
HO, LASH, JUST A
SUGGESTION!

GOOD! NOW LET'S
GO, RUSH!

AND AT THE SAME TIME... AT THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE,IN SUGAR LEAF...

BIG ED! WHAT BRINGS
YOU HERE? YOU LOOK THE
PICTURE OF HEALTH!

I WANT YOU TO SIGN A
CERTIFICATE OF MY DEATH,
DOCTOR!















6 BUT AS TH RACES THE BUCKBOARD ACROSS THE DUSKY TRAIL, HE DOESN'T NOTICE ...



SHORTLY AFTER... WHO! THIS LOOKS LIKE A GOOD PLACE TO BURY THE BODY!



(GASP!) IT'S DONE! IT MUST HAVE FALLEN OUT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE TRAIL! I'D BETTER RACE BACK AND FIND IT BEFORE SOMEONE ELSE DOES!



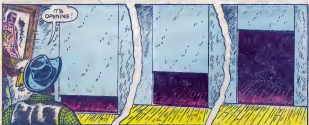
7 LASH TRACES HIS WAY BACK ALONG THE TRAIL ...

I DON'T FIND IT YET, BUT I CAN'T WASTE ANY MORE TIME NOW LOOKING FOR IT! IF LASH LAURE SHOULD RIDE UP TO THE B DOUBLES & ALONG THE TRAIL AND SEE ME OUT HERE SMOKING, HE'S GOING TO ASK WHY! I'D BETTER GET BACK TO THE RANCH HOUSE AND WAIT UNTIL AFTER HE LEAVES, TO SEARCH AGAIN!



THAT GHOST I SAW LAST NIGHT MUST HAVE BEEN UNCLE ED TRYING TO SCARE ME OUT OF THE HOUSE! SINCE I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING MORE TO BE AFRAID OF, I'LL GET RID OF LASH LAURE FIRST! I CAN TELL HIM I WAS DRUNK LAST NIGHT AND DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS SAYING!













BUT THE LUCK OF LARUE HAD MADE DEAD-EYE DEEP...

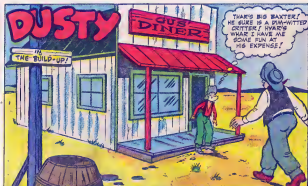


...AND HE PASSED OUT!















CAPTAIN MARVEL
WESTERN

THE MARVEL FAMILY

ROCKY LANE
WESTERN

HOPALONG CASSIDY

BETTER

THAN EVER...

...AND MORE PAGES OF YOUR FAVORITE COLOR CHARACTERS!

LASH LARUE
WESTERN

TEX BITTER
WESTERN

SEE GUN
HEROES

BUMPS & ANIMALS

10¢

100% RECYCLED PAPER

MOLASSES MOUTH



RELAX!



AS SOON AS YUH FINISH WHAT
YU'RE DOING, I WANT TO SEE
YU & JOE DANCE!



PROVING MARSHALL, LASH LOUDEL, THE TWO-DECK KING OF THE GULLAGHER, WORKING AT A DESK JOB IN A STENOGRAPH OFFICE? JUST WAIT IS DONE ON 7.

LOOK HERE, LARRY, YOU WERE HIRED TO WORK HERE UNDER A DIFFERENT NAME. DO YOU COULD GET A LEAD ON THE STRASBOACH ROADBLOCK. BUT LARRY SAYS

—BY GUN,
WE'VE BEEN
HERE THREE
WEEKS AND
I'VE GOTTEN
NONE! ARE YOU STILL
SO SURE IT'S
AN EASY
JOB?

POSITIVE, TOLLEY! THE
EVEN COACHES THAT
HAVE BEEN HELD UP
ARE THOSE CARRYING
VALUABLE CARGO. IF
SOMEONE WINKING
HERE WASN'T TIPPING
THE HIGH RISK OFF,
HOW COULD THEY KNOW
WHICH CO. WOULD BE ATTACKED
AND WHICH COACHES TO
LET GO, RIGHT?

I KNOW THAT
MAKES SENSE, LOTS
BUT IN THE LAST
LETTER I RECEIVED
FROM THE HOME
OFFICE, THE B&B AG
IS DEMANDING ACTION
—NOT THEORY!

WILL
LOST IT
FIRST
ENOUGH
POTENTIAL



SOUNDS LIKE A NIGHTY GOOD PLAN, LARRY! BUT YOU HAVE TO ADMIT IT'S RISKY! I DON'T DARE SEND ONE OF MY REGULAR DRIVERS OUT KNOWING HE'S GOING TO BE ATTACKED BY HIGHWAYMEN!

I KNOW YOU'RE RIGHT, TOLLEY! SINCE I WORK HERE, IT WOULDN'T SEEM UNUSUAL TO LAYTON IF I WERE TO DRIVE THE COACH!

NO, LAYTON WOULD NEVER SUSPECT ANYTHING WAS OUT OF THE WAY! I HATE TO SEE EVEN YOU TAKE CHANCES, LARRY! BUT I SUPPOSE THERE'S PART OF BEING A LAWMAN!

THANKS FOR YOUR CONCERN, TOLLEY, BUT I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF! NOW WHILE I GO TELL THE SHERIFF TO ROLL UP A PAPER, YOU START THE BALL ROLLING!

I DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT MARSHAL METHODS, BUT I KNOW YOU'LL BE BETTER OFF IF YOU AND THE SHERIFF AND HIS POLES RIGHT INSIDE THE COACH AS POSSIBLE - GARS THAT WAY TARDI BE NO CHANCE OF THE BANDITS HEARING THEM APPROACH AND BEING SCARED OFF BEFORE THEY LED YOU TO THE RIDE-OUT!

YOU'VE GOT A POINT THERE, TOLLEY!



SHORTLY AFTER...



EXCUSE ME, GENTS! I'LL BE BACK IN A FEW MINUTES! YOU CAN DEAL ME OUT OF THE NEXT HAND!

WHATEVER YOU SAY, GILCH!



LET'S STEP IN THE ALLEY AT THE SIDE OF THE SALOON! NOBODY'LL SEE US TAKING THAT! I HOPE YOU GOT WORD OF THE NEXT VALUABLE SHIPMENT OR YOU WOULDN'T HAVE CONTACTED ME NOW!

IT'S APPEARED THE NEXT JOB IS GOING TO BE DELAYED! THAT LINDOO WHO'S BEEN MAKING BELIEVE HE'S A CLERK AND HAS BEEN WORKING IN OUR OFFICE FOR THE LAST THREE WEEKS IS GETTING WISE!

I KNOW YOU'LL HAVE TO DO WHAT I SUGGESTED WHEN YOU FIRST DISCOVERED WHO HE REALLY WAS --- TRAIL HIM WHEN HE LEAVES TONIGHT AND KILL HIM!

THAT SOUNDS BENSER THAN IT REALLY WILL BE! THIS MARSHAL HOPING TO BE LASH LAURE AND ALL THE NOBLES WHO HAD THE SAME IDEA AS YOU JUST ARE FILLING UP MORE THAN ONE CEMETERY!



LASH LAURE WESTERN





AND THAT'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT! THERE'S NO GALT IN IT OR THE DEAL!



I RECKON WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO GO BACK AND LOCK UP LAYTON AND TRY TO MAKE HIM TALK!



WHAT'S YOUR PLAN, LASH? FROM THAT THINKE IN YOUR EYE, I CAN SEE IT MUST BE SOMETHING GOOD!



AND AFTER THE KING OF THE BELLRING EXPLAINS...

AND NOW THAT THEY THINK WE'RE DEAD, IT SHOULD BE EASY TO TRAP THEM! I WANT YOU TO TELL LAYTON YOU'VE GOT A SPECIAL GOLD SHIPMENT COMING OUT IN A FEW HOURS! THAT SHOULD BE TIME ENOUGH FOR HIM TO CONTACT GUNN AND GET THE GANG IN OPERATION AGAIN!



THEY'RE WAITING IN THE WELLS! I'VE GOT TO BRING THEM SOME HORSES AND LET THEM KNOW WHICH ROUTE YOU'RE GOING TO SEND THE COACH ALONG, AND...



SINCE THE SHARPS KNEW THE LAST COACH WAS JUST A TRAP, I SUGGEST YOU USE REAL GOLD THIS TIME! IN CASE THEY CHECK, THEY'LL HAVE NO REASON TO SUSPECT ANYTHING THAT WAY!



THE AMADALLO TRAIL'S AS GOOD AS DEAD TO LET THEM HOLD UP THE COACH! AS SOON AS THEY'RE OUT OF SIGHT, WE AIM TO TURN BACK TO THEM, RIDE OUT AND HAS THE LEADER!



YOU'VE GOT A TIGHT TIME HERE OF YER, LASH! WHY DON'T YER GET SOME REST? I'LL BRING THE HORSES OUT TO THE POOSSE AND TELL THEM TO REST 'TIL ON THE AMADALLO TRAIL!



THAT'S MIGHTY THOUGHTFUL OF YER, TULLY! AND IF YOU DON'T MIND, SINCE I'LL BE DRIVING, I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D TAKE MY HORSE, RIDE ALONG! I'LL MEET YER ON THE WAY BACK!



OKAY, LASH! I'LL TELL LAYTON TO ORDER A COACH TO CARRY THE SHIPMENT OF GOLD AND THEN I'LL BE ON MY WAY!





IT DOESN'T MATTER! LASH WON'T NEED IT AFTER TODAY! I'LL JUST LEAVE THE HORSE WIND! NOW TO GET BACK!



IN A SHORT WHILE...

OKAY, LASH! TAKE HER AWAY! AND LET'S PRAY THAT NOTHING GOES WRONG BECAUSE YOU'RE CARRYING A FORTUNE IN GOLD THIS TIME!

THE WAY THINGS ARE SET UP NOTHING CAN GO WRONG!



ENTER, IN THE MEAN...

THE SHERIFF AND HIS POSSE ARE DOING A PERFECT JOB OF TRAILING! IF I DIDN'T KNOW THEY WERE FOLLOWING ME, I'D NEVER SUSPECT IT! THEY'RE SURE KEEPING OUT OF SIGHT!



HERE COME THE HIGHWAYMEN!

CLIMB DOWN---AND WITH YOUR HANDS UP!



NORMALLY I'D MAKE A MISTAKE OF THIS, BUT THE PLAN IS TO LET THEM RIDE OFF WITH THE CARGO SO THE SHERIFF AND I CAN FOLLOW THEM TO THE HIDE-OUT---AND THE BIG BOSS!



FROM HIM RIGHT AS WELL TAKE THE WHOLE COACH! IT WOULD BE THE EASIEST WAY TO GET ALL THE STUFF TO THE HIDE-OUT! BUT WAIT! ABOUT THIS HORSE? SHOULD HE SHOOT HIM?

NO! TAKE HIM ALONG! THE BOSS SAID HE WANTED TO HANDLE HIM HIMSELF!

I DON'T EXPECT THEM TO TAKE ME ALONG, BUT WITH THE SHERIFF AND THE POSSE FOLLOWING, IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE!



GODDAM!



RUSH HAS SEEN IT ALL, BUT IS IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO RECOGNIZE HIS MASTER IN DISGUISE?

ONE HINDS TRAIL LEADS INTO ANOTHER, ACROSS A RAVINE INTO A CLEARING, AND THEN ...

TIE HIM UP IN THE BACK ROOM UNTIL THE BOSS GETS HYAR!



ONE HOUR LATER...

AN HOUR'S GONE BY AT LEAST. THE SHERIFF SHOULD HAVE ISSUED IN HYAR BY NOW WITH THE HORSE, AND CAPTURED ALL THESE BANDITS SO THEY COULD CATCH THE BOSS OFF GUARD WHEN HE ARRIVED!



BUT JUST WHERE IS THE SHERIFF?

THAT COACH SHOULD HAVE SEEN HYAR BY NOW! SOMETHING MUST HAVE GONE WRONG!

THAT'S WHAT IS THINKING, TOO!



RUMBLE THE COACH WAS HELD UP BEFORE THEY REACHED HYAR! WE'D BETTER GO BACK AND SEE!



THE SHERIFF AND THE POLICE FOLLOWED THE TRAIL ALL THE WAY BACK TO TOWN!

STILL NO SIGN OF THE COACH, AND THAT'S MOROSE! INSIDE THE STAGE-COACH OFFICE TO TELL US WHETHER IT WENT OUT OR NOT!

WATCH OUT! THAT HORSE IS HEADED RIGHT FOR US!

WESTERN STAGE CO. OFFICE



WHY, IT'S LASH'S HORSE, RUSH!



HE'S RIDING AWAY BUT HE KEEPS LOOKING BACK!

MAKES ME'S TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING!





WATERS! RECKON WE'D BETTER PULCH AND MAKE SURE!



[WATERS...] SOMETHING MUST HAVE GONE WRONG OR THE SHERIFF WOULD HAVE BEEN HERE BY NOW--AND (GULP!) THE HEAVY DOORS OPENING! IT MUST BE THE BAD BOSS!



WHA... MEN! HOW DID THOSE DO IT? PERFECT, JUST LIKE Y'UN PLANNED!

TOLLEY! NO WONDER THE SHERIFF'S NOT HERE! HE PROBABLY SENT THEM IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION!



SEND OUT THAT LAWDOG SO I CAN SHOOT HIM! EVERY DAY FOR THREE WEEKS I TRIED TO DISCOURAGE HIM SO HE'D LEAVE, BUT HE INSISTED UPON STAYING! NOW HE'S GOING TO PAY FOR IT!

I'LL GET HIM, BOSS!



URGE HIM! I'D LIKE TO SEE THIS TOWN WOMBIE TRY TO RUN... AS I SHOOT HIM!



HURRY! EVERY SECOND COUNTS! LAUREN'S LIFE MIGHT DEPEND UPON IT!



AT THE SAME TIME... LOOK, SHERIFF! RUSH IS STOPPING NEAR THAT CABIN!

THE COACH IS HERE, TOO! GET YOUR GUNS READY! I'M AFRAID WE'RE IN REAL TROUBLE!



BUT IT LOOKS AS IF THEY'RE TOO LATE ALREADY.

THAT'S NOT MUCH PLACE FOR Y'UN TO HIDE IS THAT? HA... HA... AND WHEN YOUR DEAR LAURE, THE SHERIFF, WILL NEVER FIND OUT I SENT HIM ON A WILD GOOSE CHASE!

THAT'S RIGHT, TOLLEY! WE CAN GO RIGHT ON FLEEING THE BRASSBOOTH COMPANY!



Backfire

(Continued from inside front cover)

for and something else took its place beside Kedder's troubles. The weather had been dry. It was Bob's duty to make the rounds of the valley ranches to make sure there were no violations of fire ordinances. In the past, some ranchers had been careless, allowing rubbish piles to grow near their alfalfa fields and sometimes start disastrous fires.

The sun was sinking as he hit the trail over the low rises to the south. The summits of these would bring him into view of most of the valley. He saw nothing amiss as he continued along. The valley was a bustle of activity. Bushhouse gangs from four separate spreads were rounding up calves and returning them to the herds. A better smile crossed Bob Carey's face. Poor Jim Kedder! With no money in his poke, he would have lost his bushhouse boys long ago.

The sun was already below the horizon when he completed his round and turned down the road heading past Rudge's spread to the Bar-T. Jim Kedder, he figured, could use a little friendly company.

He had just topped a rise in the road which brought him into full view of Cad Rudge's spread when he saw the barrel, like an explosion.

"Thunderation!" Carey yelled, spurring his horse forward.

Rudge's east pasture was ablaze! The ranch walkin' rang furiously. As he sped down the road, the tin-star could see the fire burning directly across the far edge of Rudge's spread toward the boundary of the Bar-T. Rudge, he knew, had plenty of waddies to help him, while Jim Kedder would be alone. An instant later he made his decision and tore on down toward the Bar-T. He swept into the ranch-yard ten minutes later. Kedder, somewhat dazed, was standing in front of his old medicine wagon, filling bottles from a huge barrel of some mixture. Carey hastily dismounted as Kedder nodded.

"No use, Bob," he said sadly. "She'll take off my alfalfa as well as Rudge's. You know that well's I do. Now I'm really ruined!"

The tin-star's face fell. He nodded slowly.

"Yeah, if only we could get a backfire started fast enough to . . ." He passed and suddenly his eyes bugged out as he watched Kedder mechanically filling bottles. "What in tarnation's that?"

"New mud pack mixture," Kedder said embarrassedly. "Good mud from back of my ranch house."

To Kedder's amazement, Carey saddled his own cayuse to a buckboard standing nearby. Then he found himself, under the sheriff's di-

rection, hoisting the barrel of mixture up on the buckboard at an angle, so it could slop over.

"I'm startin' a fire!" Carey yelled, driving off with the mud slopping out of the tipped barrel in a continuous stream. "And on the way back, the tailboard of this wagon will smother a fire-break through it. We'll save your grass yet, Jim. The wind's changing! The fire'll burn back toward Rudge's alfalfa!"

Bug-eyed, Jim Kedder watched the buckboard tear down through the alfalfa, leaving a thin trail of mud behind it. At the far end of the pasture, where the alfalfa petered out, it stopped. Carey ditched the barrel, turned the buckboard around and let down the tailboard until it dragged on the ground. Then he lit a match and threw it on the mud. Instantly, along the mud-line a blaze sprang up, coming toward Kedder. And following it, with the tailboard creating a firebreak, while the wind whipped the fire back toward Rudge's spread, came the buckboard at a slow, meandering pace. As it reached Kedder it stopped and the tin-star sprang out. Both men watched the holocaust burn toward Rudge's almost annihilated fields.

"What in thunder you do?" Kedder demanded.

"We needed a fast fire to make that fire-break in a straight line!" Carey explained. "And that mud you got in your backyard is soaked in petroleum. It's been oozing up from underneath. You didn't recognize what it was!"

"Then it was Rudge who set that fire!" Kedder exclaimed.

"Sure, Rudge probably found out about the oil in the mud before you did. He's the sneo-piest moss in the valley. Then he decided to starve you out, keep you from a loan, bid in your spread cheap and grab the oil. But he overheard you sayin' you were bottlin' the stuff, realized he had to burn you out, wagon and all so you wouldn't know what you had—and ruin you besides! But the firebreak stopped that. Now he'll suffer. His own alfalfa's destroyed—and you can recoup your own losses selling him what's left of yours. You can put in drillin' equipment with the dough."

CAREY passed, his voice hardening. "But that isn't all. I noticed Rudge was the only rancher who had a rubbish pile—and a new one, too. He built it to cover an excuse for the fire, even if it meant a fine. I'm riding back right now to pick him up for fire violations. Ninety days in the hoosegow—and a two-thousand dollar fine!"

THE END

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Name.....Age.....

Address.....Phone.....

City.....

Zone.....County.....

State.....Occupation.....

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500 S. 4th, Minneapolis 15, Minn.

Please enter my attached drawing
in your Draw a Car contest.
(PLEASE PRINT)

Name.....Age.....

Address.....Phone.....

City.....

Zone.....County.....

State.....Occupation.....

Art Instruction, Inc., Dept. 8123-3
500 S. 4th, Minneapolis 15, Minn.

Please enter my attached drawing
in your Draw a Car contest.
(PLEASE PRINT)

Name.....Age.....

Address.....Phone.....

City.....

Zone.....County.....

State.....Occupation.....